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Enhancing the capacity of public administration to implement the United Nations Millennium Declaration

Strategies for high-quality staffing in the public sector

Summary

The present paper presents critical issues in staffing the public sector relating to performance and to linking public sector human capacity to the achievement of the Millennium development goals, and ultimately sustainable development. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration is invited to offer advice to Member States and to consider future activities proposed by the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance around this issue.

Although many gains have been made in public administration recently, there has been an erosion, in varying forms, of public sector human capacity in many countries. This erosion is due to a differing mix of converging factors that have diminished the social value placed on the public sector. The net result has been a loss of pride within and credibility outside of the public service, significantly tarnishing the reputation of public sector institutions. For staffing, this translates into less competitiveness for employment in the public than in the private sector, in a labour market subject to regionally diverging demographic trends, more global competition and changing job profiles.

The public sector's compelling need for its fair share of the best talent centres on the challenges of responding effectively to evolving traditional functions of the State, as well as the challenges of globalization and other social changes. The State needs to provide leadership in defining a home-grown governance framework to drive the economic development agenda, to adapt its public policy-making to the forces of globalization, to meet the public's demands for a greater voice and more

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accountability and to be a model employer. In the face of these changes, the core competencies most needed in the public sector, particularly of developing countries, include a committed and principled leadership, informed policy analysis, professional and accountable management and accessible and responsive service delivery. However, a link must be made between the best talent and sound institutional frameworks, within an environment of good governance, for optimal performance. Thus, strengthening public sector human capacity requires a holistic approach and a long-term strategy that are cognizant of the particular situations of individual Member States.

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I. Introduction

1. The purpose of the present paper is to present critical issues in staffing the public sector relating to performance. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration is invited to offer its views and advice on how to enhance staffing and the human capacity in the public sector, generally, to Member States. The Committee is also invited to prioritize among future activities proposed by the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance, and perhaps to add other activities, so as to best support Member States in these important tasks. At the conclusion of its first meeting, in July 2002, the Committee identified six priority areas in which Member States could build their capacity to implement the Millennium Declaration. Foremost among them was that "The public sector must develop a strategy to recruit and retain its fair share of the best talent".[1]

2. The Committee's conclusions were in response to an increasing global consensus about the urgency of meeting the basic needs of the poorest in our drive for sustainable human development. This concern is reflected in the Millennium development goals[2] and other intergovernmental commitments, such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for sustainable development.[3] The United Nations Millennium Declaration sets out the key objectives for our actions: peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; environmental protection; human rights, democracy and good governance; protecting the vulnerable; meeting the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the United Nations. At the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, delegates agreed upon a number of important targets and timetables to spur action. On the African continent, leadership has rallied behind the New Partnership for Africa's Development. These are landmark steps towards improving the lives of the people most in need in the world.

3. However, we must acknowledge that such targets will not be reached without sufficient capacities in governance and public administration, particularly in States that are poor in resources. The need for institutional and human resources capacity-building in public administration is therefore more pressing than ever. Sustainable human development cannot be achieved without commitment to poverty reduction and adequate capacity at the national and international levels to reach the Millennium development goals. As the Committee noted in its first report, strengthening good governance is about capacity-building through institutions and people. The knowledge, skills, networks and attitudes of people in the public sector are at the heart of the performance of States, for it is through people and by people that services are planned and delivered, critical innovations conceived and realized and needed reforms carried out.

4. The present paper discusses the various facets of the enormous challenge of ensuring adequate public sector human capacity to fulfil the obligations involved in achieving the Millennium development goals, and ultimately sustainable development. The challenge of recruiting and retaining a fair share of the best talent raises a number of important questions:

- Has there been an erosion of public sector human capacity recently? In what ways has the erosion been manifested? What are the factors that have contributed to the erosion?
- How are labour market conditions affecting the staffing situation in the public sector today, especially in developing countries?

- Why does the public sector need a fair share of the best talent?
- What are the talents or core competencies that are critical to the performance of the public sector?
- What are the environmental factors that affect performance in the public sector? What role does the quality of public institutions and governance play?
- What should be done to strengthen public sector human capacity in Member States?
- What role should the United Nations play in facilitating the necessary capacity-building?

II. Erosion of public sector human capacity?

5. Although many gains have been made in public administration recently, the Committee's foremost concern is that there has been an erosion of public sector human capacity in many countries. This view is echoed by other public administration scholars and practitioners who see the erosion as a creeping crisis. The erosion has taken on differing forms in different countries, including:

- a sheer reduction in the number of public sector personnel
- brain drain to the private sector and more economically advanced countries
- less-than-optimal performance in the public sector due to conflicting directions regarding the core functions of the State, inadequate incentive structures, such as remuneration packages and career opportunities, and laxity in standards of competence and conduct
- a loss of pride within and credibility outside of the public service, influenced by an erroneous perception of the superiority of the private over the public sector, among other factors.

6. These types of erosion have been brought on by a differing mix of converging factors in different countries and regions. Whether intended or not, these factors have resulted in a diminishment of the social value placed on the public sector, with a corresponding ascendancy of the private sector. Reality does not support such a "competitive" approach to the two sectors. Rather, we realize that these two sectors, in partnership with civil society, play distinct but complementary roles in governance. Furthermore, the State, given its entrusted powers, must take leadership in enabling a consensus on a nation's governance framework.

7. The factors include:

- the overall questioning of the role of the State, with many countries adopting or being forced to adopt sudden and significant shifts in core functions in response to globalization
- a deliberate political and/or economic liberalization, moving from a society with an all-encompassing State to a more pluralist and market-based society in transitional countries
- the pressure to make structural adjustments to the public sector due to unsustainable national public debts in many developing countries

- the introduction of private sector management philosophies within public administration in yet other countries
- a gradual decay of national governance structures in stagnating countries.

8. The various combinations of these factors in different countries have also resulted in reforms in the public sector, including:

- retrenchment in public goods and services
- deregulation of many economic sectors
- privatization of many State enterprises
- commercialization of many public services
- simplification of administrative procedures
- public sector personnel reduction, in many instances.

9. As in the case of many reforms, the results have been mixed. However, it is beyond the scope of the present paper to present a detailed balance sheet of the positive and negative impacts on public administration. Suffice it to point out that on the positive side, in many cases:

- the State is no longer considered to be the sole provider of public services
- there is more responsiveness to citizens' needs than before
- fiscal responsibility and discipline, where these have resulted, have taught the public sector that it is possible to provide improved services with fewer resources
- the reforms have sometimes had the effect of improving managerial transparency and accountability
- some of the skills related to private sector management, such as strategic planning and performance management, have been useful in making public sector operations more environmentally sensitive, responsive and global in outlook.

10. However, on the negative side, the impacts include in many instances:

- an erroneous, growing belief in the market as the primary mechanism for efficiently allocating resources in both the private and public spheres, with a corresponding reduction of social recognition for and trust in the public sector, as alluded to above
- a loosening of traditional controls in the public administration, leading to less transparency and accountability, particularly in those cases where such controls were missing or weak to begin with
- increasing politicization and a decline in the professionalism of the public service
- the moral hazard of low public sector remuneration relative to alternative employment options.

11. The net result has been the various types of erosion in public sector human capacity listed above. In particular, the loss of pride within and credibility outside of

the public service has significantly tarnished the reputation of public sector institutions. For staffing, this translates into employment in the public sector becoming less attractive and motivating than in the private sector. What is critical now is that the social value placed on the public sector be restored and the competitiveness of its employer status be reinstated. Without proactively reversing the trend of public sector human capacity erosion, it is impossible for the public sector to attract and retain a fair share of the best talent.

III. Labour market conditions that affect staffing in the public sector

12. In addition to the overall reforms affecting staffing, the public sector — like any other employer — also needs to consider labour market factors such as demographic trends, international migration and health risks that affect overall labour supply and demand within a country.

13. From the labour supply side, we may note demographic trends that characterize the pool of entrants to and those already in the labour force that have implications for staffing in the public sector. For example, many European and other developed countries have an ageing population. This trend has caused a demographic bulge because of the preponderance of members of the post-World War II generation in the public sector, and presents the potential for a mass exodus of public sector employees, particularly at the management level, upon their retirement. This forecast has necessitated calls for succession planning and accelerated training for middle-level managers in many countries. Conversely, most developing countries, especially those in Africa that have experienced severe wars and civil strife, have very young populations. In these situations, the challenge of staffing is to find a sufficient number of experienced senior managers and policy advisers to fulfil all public sector needs. At the same time, it is the duty of both Governments and enterprises to create employment for the young.

14. In addition, countries also face challenges based on the health risks faced by their labour force. One such challenge is HIV/AIDS, which poses a risk to people not only in the public sector but in society as a whole. Because of general socio-economic and health conditions, this challenge is most acute in developing countries. Although the statistical picture of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the capacity of the public sector has not yet been clearly studied, certain trends in society in general may be extrapolated for the public sector. The efforts of many Governments to develop cadres of the best talent in the public sector may yet be undermined by the scourge of HIV/AIDS. In addition to HIV/AIDS, we can also add other pandemics and epidemics to the list of health risks to be managed.

15. From the demand side, globalization has accelerated the international dimension of the competition for educated and skilled labour, often resulting in what is commonly known as brain drain. Simply put, the attraction of higher wages, better career opportunities and improved living conditions often lures away the best and the brightest from developing to developed countries. As the demand increases for specialists with skills highly in demand, such as in information and communication technologies, health sciences, engineering and management, among others, the public sector in developing countries may experience a chronic shortage of competent personnel in these areas. In addition, the very nature of the skills and

knowledge needed in the public sector are shifting everywhere, due to the forces unleashed by globalization and the adoption of new technologies and management techniques.

16. Clearly, the challenges and achievements of staffing in the public sector can be determined only when the status quo in each country or region is examined. However, the difficulty of recruiting, retaining and maintaining productivity levels of competent staff in public sector organizations in many countries, especially developing countries, is being increasingly acknowledged. The biggest worry currently is that the magnitude of the challenge of the Millennium development goals may be beyond the existing levels of skills and resources in the public sector.

IV. Fair share of best talent for a changing State

17. There are many compelling reasons why the public sector needs its fair share of the best talent. They centre on the need for the public sector to respond effectively to evolving traditional functions of the State, as well as the challenges of globalization and other social changes. For these reasons, it is of prime importance that the public sector be able to rely on competent personnel among its ranks. These points are further discussed below.

1. The State provides leadership in enabling the definition of a home-grown governance framework

18. A holistic governance framework requires that all partners develop their capacity equally in order for each to play its role. The goal of defining such a framework is not for one sector to overpower another, but for all sectors to support one another to achieve an optimal balance of power and functions. Nonetheless, we must recognize that the State needs to provide leadership in this process through law-making, regulatory and security-related functions, as it is the ultimate guarantor of life, liberty and property. However, in many developing countries where there are limitations to building up human capacity, many of the reconfigurations of functions have been designed with a strong reliance on foreign experts. This reliance has raised the issue of ownership of such reforms. To ensure their ownership of home-grown reforms, countries should develop the intellectual capacity to design their own reforms at a pace that is in accord with their cultural, political, social and economic environment. It is increasingly emphasized that reforms should be implemented by developing countries, not exported to them. Without the public sector attracting, recruiting, retaining and utilizing the best talent, such a challenge is difficult to meet.

2. There is a strong correlation between an effective public sector and the economic competitiveness of a country

19. Conceptually and in reality, any overemphasis on the role of the private to the detriment of the public sector overlooks the very large role that the latter plays in the economic development of a nation. In many countries, the sheer proportion of the public sector in relation to the overall economy means that its performance and productivity levels will affect prospects for national economic growth and competitiveness. Furthermore, the State sets the direction for a national growth strategy through macroeconomic and fiscal policies, public investment and, often,

incubating new technologies and industries. Even in those countries where the main engines of growth are in the private sector, the State plays an invaluable regulatory role in the economy. Such crucial tasks cannot be undertaken without highly trained and competent individuals.

3. The challenges of globalization are complicating the already complex art and science of public policy-making

20. Globalization — through the increasing interpenetration of markets, the interdependence of sovereign States and the fostering of a civil society at the global level — is bringing home the reality of the notion of the global community. Proponents of globalization have touted its benefits, such as faster economic growth, more economic opportunities and higher standards of living. However, critics of globalization feel that the process is bypassing large swaths of particularly vulnerable populations, both in the North and the South, leaving their plight worse than it was before. Thus, participatory public policy-making, as advocated by the principle of good governance, is more complex than ever before. On the one hand, with the rapid flow of information made possible by a diffusion of information and communication technologies, countries must now draw on an ever-increasing group of stakeholders in their decision-making. On the other, public policy outcomes, both in terms of benefits and losses, can now reach beyond national boundaries. To broker such a multi-tasked and multi-layered process, the public sector needs the services of men and women who have an understanding of the rapid changes brought about by globalization.

4. Public administrations need to adopt more consultative and participatory approaches at all levels to meet the public's demands for a greater voice and more accountability

21. The reality of public administration today is that it is increasingly becoming "public" as opposed to bureaucratic and self-contained. It is through partnerships and the mobilization of all stakeholders at community, local government, national, regional and international levels that countries will be able to hear the voices of all who participate in sustainable human development. Moreover, what distinguishes the public sector from other sectors is its accountability to the public. This accountability requires an efficient management of its limited resources in a way that is wise, focused on the key goals and consistent with the demands of democracy. However, it is not the demands of democracy alone that make the public sector operations unique, but also the fact that they must now reconcile these demands with fundamental private sector values. This situation puts pressure on public sector managers to meet the same efficiency standards as their counterparts in the private sector while still carrying out their operations with consideration for the democratic process.[4] A resulting contradiction is that public management has become more complex, while its human capacity to carry out its functions has been diminishing. Highly competent and credible people who consult and answer for their actions will do much to restore trust in public institutions.

5. The State can be a model employer, setting an example with good practices for others to follow

22. Beyond the needs of strategic leadership and making development policy, we need to note that in most developing countries the State is a critical, if not, the

largest, employer. In this sense, we could say that it is a model employer. What it does or does not do has a far-reaching impact on employment practices in other sectors. It makes labour policies, laws and regulations (including those related to remuneration, social security and working conditions) that are used as guidelines by other sectors. It also sets ethical standards and should lead by example in meeting those standards. In recruitment and promotion it should enshrine equality of opportunity regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or religion for a fair representation of all segments of society.

V. Core competencies for the public sector

23. Beyond sheer numbers, human capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, attitudes, networks and cherished values of people. Any country that seeks to attract and retain its fair share of the best talent in its public sector must first and foremost identify the talents needed. The core competencies needed in the public sector today depend not only on the many traditional State functions but also on the new dimensions of those functions that come with the changes and challenges outlined in the previous section. Clearly, the identification of core competencies also depends on the specific situation of a country. Considering developing countries in particular, we can generalize that the following core competencies are needed in the public sector today:

1. A committed and principled leadership at all levels of the public sector

24. In today's environment, the public sector needs to be led by people capable of coping with the complexity and conflict contained in the context of globalization. They also need to deal with all forms of diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity and religion, often both subnationally and transnationally. The roles and responsibilities for orienting and activating the entire workforce of the public sector in meaningful directions, as well as passing on core values, require a strong, committed and principled leadership. These types of leaders should be found in all parts of the public sector, including elected officials, top bureaucrats, heads of public sector enterprises and holders of top positions in local governments. By "walking the walk", they can nurture an environment within which the overall public service can serve citizens, ensuring fairness, equity and due process and providing a sense of purpose, legitimacy and responsiveness, and an ability to look outward, inward and forward.

2. Informed and consultative policy analysis and development

25. Governance and public administration include the higher-order tasks of providing policy analysis and development that form the basis of blueprints for a society and a nation. One of the primary roles of the public service is to ensure a capacity to develop policies and strategies, forecast and anticipate future trends and react to rapidly changing global and local conditions. Such tasks require that policy analysis and development be carried out by creative and self-critical people who are not afraid to challenge the status quo. They also require that such policy analysts consult those communities that are to be assisted or that will somehow be affected by the policies and ensuing services. Enabling this "co-production" of services with citizens requires good communication skills that involve active listening to

communities through various research methods. It also requires translating those needs into politically workable and economically feasible programmes.

3. Professional and accountable management and administration

26. In order for public policies to be transformed into successful programmes, they need to be managed professionally. The managers and administrators need to adhere to the principles of probity, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, economy and efficiency. These principles apply to all aspects of public management and administration: human resources, finances and information, to name a few. For instance, in many public services in developing countries, positions responsible for forecasting, planning, developing and managing the various resources in the public sector are occupied by individuals who are often insufficiently trained. Consequently, management basics such as maintaining records, processing data and information, efficiently allocating resources, measuring performance, increasing productivity gains and other such tasks can be ignored. The public sector requires professionals capable of adequately managing and carrying out the administration of the public programmes and services.

4. Accessible and responsive provision of public services

27. While skills and knowledge are essential for performing any public sector function, traits such as professionalism and integrity are also integral to providing good services. Health, education, social services, transportation, public works, administration of justice and other public services provide an interface between the State and citizens in everyday life. Generally, it is through this front-line contact that the public primarily forms its opinion about the public sector. However, a lack of professionalism and integrity breeds and sustains corruption and other forms of maladministration that may characterize the public sector of a country. In such situations, many projects and programmes aimed at improving service delivery and reducing poverty miss their objectives because of the diversion or embezzlement of public resources. In order to ensure a fair and efficient delivery of services, it is critical to recruit professional and ethical people and to train them to observe due process in delivering public services.

VI. Improving human capacity in the public sector also requires sound public institutions and good governance

28. However, just having a large number of people with the right core competencies does not necessarily guarantee effective performance. Those people also need to operate within appropriate institutional frameworks. Once a national consensus has been reached on the redefinition of the role of the State, the civil service and other public services, as institutions, need to be buttressed by clearly articulated core public service values and standards. These values and standards may be enshrined in the constitution or other appropriate legislation. But they also need to be practised by all and, particularly, demonstrated by both the political and administrative leadership.

29. Simple and practical management and administrative practices need to be institutionalized so that public sector employees can most effectively and efficiently carry out their duties. In addition, they need to be given proper tools and resources,

in addition to training. The institutions in which they work need to have clear mandates and internal accountability structures. The performance of these institutions also needs to be monitored by a system of legislative, administrative and judicial controls to hold them externally accountable. This implies the existence of functioning legislatures, independent oversight bodies and a judiciary. Once problems have been identified, there has to be political will on the part of the executive to rectify them; and there has to be transparency in all decisions and actions to allow the public to judge for itself the performance of the public sector.

30. In other words, there has to be a national governance system in which there is an acceptable division of power and participation by the people. Therefore, a major part of the effort to reverse the trend of public sector human capacity erosion involves building up institutional capacity. This in turn depends on improvements in the wider governance environment. Without good governance,[5] the best talent cannot be identified, recruited and developed; nor can it be effectively utilized. It is difficult to convince the best swimmers to take a dive into a dirty pool. It is most certainly even harder to retain them there to demonstrate their swimming skills.

31. Public sector institutional reforms do not present themselves in the same way in all countries. There are institutional environments that are conducive to individual initiative and recognize committed work. Others tolerate such a level of performance. But there are still others that repel, repulse or even expel exceptional individuals, perhaps threatened by them. And governance environments that do not recognize the effective rule of law, due process, justice, integrity, transparency and accountability, security of person and property, basic freedoms and human rights can hardly expect to have sound public institutions. In such cases, it is difficult to attract or even effectively utilize the best talent. This is so not only in the public but also in the other sectors. It is not the aim of the present paper to explore extensively the relationship between the wider issues of governance, institutional capacity and staffing in the public sector. However, the link must be made between recruiting the best people for the public sector and the need for strong and credible public institutions, supported by overall good governance.

VII. Conclusion: strengthening public sector human capacity requires a holistic approach

32. Strengthening human capacity in the public sector globally is complex because regions and countries are not homogeneous. Even labour market conditions for the public and private sectors within a single country are not homogeneous. Therefore, there are substantial differences even among categories of skills, calling for differing strategies for staffing.

33. Nonetheless, an overall approach should address the restoration of pride within and the credibility of the public sector. In those cases where poor performance and a negative image push out the best employees while at the same time deterring promising young graduates, efforts to staff the public sector for better performance will be unsuccessful. Improving the performance of the public sector depends on long-term strategies that cannot be put into effect without a sound institutional framework, as mentioned above. A reform of key institutions lends credibility and legitimacy to other reforms. This credibility and legitimacy may not only dispel a

negative image but also boost performance and promote pride in the public sector. Therefore, there has to be a sustained strategy that encompasses aspects of:

- rebuilding trust in the public sector
- recruiting top graduates from universities and tertiary institutions into the public service
- building a fair remuneration system that is not necessarily on a par with the private sector or civil society but that is based on the cost of living, enabling those who choose to dedicate their working life to the public service to have an adequate quality of life.

34. Staffing affects every activity in human resource management. The activities include forecasts of human resource needs, planning, profiles of competencies, selection, recruitment, deployment, development (including training), career management, performance evaluation, discipline, remuneration, promotion and separation, and there is a necessary relationship and interdependence among all of the above. Therefore, what emerges is the need for a holistic approach. Fragmented measures cannot yield the needed results. Staffing for performance in the public sector depends on two critical factors: a long-term strategy and a credible and coherent institutional framework. These factors clearly point to the importance of the specific situation of each country in considering an appropriate human resources management system in the public service. Some countries may prefer the "career system" for public servants; others, the "job system".[6] Between these two approaches, there is a lot of room for creativity and mixing elements that can be designed into a hybrid system to suit a country. However, there are some fundamental components that are common to any workable system, as outlined below:

1. Human resource planning and management systems and units

35. There is a need to have long-term human resource development strategies and plans, based on accurate baseline data and clear forecasts of succession requirements. Within this need, there are a number of issues to consider. The public service is not one but many professions. Therefore, we need to consider having not just one but many strategies to take into account the divergent categories of tasks to be performed. Under an umbrella approach, we can subdivide the task into two broad strategies (themselves divided into a number of sub-strategies): building up a long-term career system and filling short-term needs to have tasks performed. The former supports the authority and the steering role of the State, which relies upon confidentiality, discretion and continuity — traits that are critical determinants of high levels of long-term performance. The latter applies to procuring skills roughly analogous to those used in the private sector, for clearly defined tasks over limited periods of time. This dichotomy re-emphasizes the need to have an appropriate mix, or hybrid, of career system and a job, or employment, system. In order for the planning and management functions to be institutionalized, units and administrative systems need to be put in place, properly resourced and run by human resource management professionals. In many developing countries, this function has been left too much to non-professionals. There should be deliberate and sustained programmes to develop strong cadres of human resource management professionals in the public sector.

2. Professionalizing the public service

36. In order to attract and retain highly educated and skilled people, it is very important for the public service to be professionalized. Such a professionalization needs to start with the application of the merit principle in recruitment and promotions. The merit principle requires that professional qualifications and experience be the foremost criteria for appointments to public positions, rather than political or social affiliations. The observance of such a principle would not threaten the continuity of the public service, as could occur under a "spoils system" after a transition of power. Once professionals have been recruited into the public sector, they should work within an institutional arrangement that challenges and guides them. They need to be protected from sudden political dismissals and interference in their work. High standards of professional competence and conduct should be not only expected but observed. In reality, public services in many developing countries are staffed by people who have not always met the training needs or the accreditation criteria of the professions that are needed to carry out the work. This is especially the case with certain professions such as management, accounting, auditing, engineering and others. This situation may be exacerbated by the political pressures of a spoils system and the social pressures to assist extended families and friends.

3. Incentive structure

37. In promoting the pride of men and women who devote themselves to the public service, we need to bear in mind that social recognition plays an important role. While remuneration is important, it does not work alone as an incentive to release the best performance energies out of the best talent. A related major constraint that we face is the limited financial resources of the public sector, especially in developing and poor countries. This constraint curtails competition with the private sector, which may offer high salaries in order to attract and retain the best personnel. In a situation of abject poverty, as is the case in most poor countries, the image of a starving public servant is unacceptable. However, equally or even more unacceptable is the image of a public servant enjoying a level of living that is far above the standard of living of the country he or she serves. Ways other than seeking to outbid the private sector in terms of salaries should be pursued to attract and retain the best talent in the public sector.

4. Creating the culture of a learning organization

38. The knowledge and skills sets needed by the public sector are evolving so rapidly that the recruitment of the best talent alone is not sufficient. The recruitment must be accompanied by deliberate efforts to continuously develop public sector personnel by creating the culture of a learning organization — the encouragement of updating knowledge, skills and attitudes, according to shifts in needs. To enhance the best talent, human resource development implies a number of strategic actions sustained over a long period. These include:

- ensuring a philosophy and practice of promoting continuous learning in the public service
- building and utilizing high-quality training institutions, including universities that are linked with the public sector

- emphasizing various human resource development approaches other than classroom training, including coaching, teamwork and rotations, among other measures
- ensuring that training is dedicated to building the capacity not just of individuals but rather of entire institutions, bearing in mind that for trained individuals, working in poor institutions is one of the most demotivating factors in the public service.

5. Strategies for tapping the best talent from underrepresented groups

39. In many countries, especially developing countries, there are a number of human resource management practices that increase the chances of leaving some of the best talent in the society unutilized or underutilized. Such practices include discrimination against women, minority groups and people with disabilities. For such talent to be brought in and effectively developed and deployed, the public sector should adopt appropriate equal opportunity policies and practices. Tools and guidelines for effective strategies and policies for managing diversity in the public service should be developed, evaluated and disseminated.

VIII. Role of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance

40. As illustrated above, the challenge of staffing for performance in the public sector is complex and contingent upon the specificities of local situations. For this reason, it is difficult, and at the same time undesirable, to arrive at universal solutions that apply to all situations.

41. The United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance has a mandate, expertise and experience to make a contribution towards supporting Member States in meeting this challenge. This support is all the more crucial with the clock ticking towards the deadlines set for meeting the Millennium development goals. In view of this renewed urgency, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration is requested to reflect upon and give input with regard to prioritizing the following proposed activities for the Programme:

- **Organizing forums at the regional level, especially for developing countries, to further discuss human resources management in the public sector and develop appropriate solutions. For example, expert group meetings could be organized in regions such as Africa, the Arab world, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific and Central and Eastern Europe, and in small island States, possibly culminating in a global expert group meeting to share the collective experience of the various participating regions**
- **Focusing some technical cooperation activities on this challenge**
- **Commissioning a study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on human resource capacity in the public sector**
- **Devoting the *World Public Sector Report* for 2004 and 2005 to human resource development in the public sector, including further research on**

and discussion of the challenge of recruiting and retaining the best talent in the public sector

- **Creating a hub on the United Nations Online Network on Public Administration and Finance, dedicated to information on human resource development and management**
- **Developing and sharing tools and guidelines (such as regional public service charters and a manual on codes of conduct) among countries**
- **Recognizing and widely publicizing good practices in human resource management through the United Nations Public Service Awards, in order to encourage Member States**
- **Assisting Member States to develop competent leadership cadres in the public sector, especially in developing countries.**

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 24* (E/2002/84-E/CN.16/2002/8), summary. The other five priority areas were public institutions becoming "learning organizations"; harnessing the power of information and communication technologies to support innovation and good governance; aligning financial and management capacities to ensure optimal mobilization and use of resources; designing and implementing effective combinations of decentralization and centralization policies; and basing capacity-building efforts on evidence-based international data.

[2] See General Assembly resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration.

[3] See *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[4] Lennart Gustafsson and Arne Svensson, *Public Sector Reform in Sweden* (Sweden, Liber Ekonomi, 1999), p. 58.

[5] Governance has been defined as a multifaceted compound situation of institutions, systems, structures, processes, procedures, practices, relationships and leadership behaviour in the exercise of social, political, economic, and managerial/administrative authority in the running of public or private affairs, and good governance as the exercise of this authority with the participation, interest and livelihood of the governed as the driving force. (John-Mary Kauzya, "Local Governance Capacity Building for Full range Participation: Concepts, Frameworks, and Experiences in African Countries", in *4th Global Forum on Reinventing Governance: Citizens, Businesses, and Governments: Dialogue and Partnerships for Development and Democracy* (United Nations, New York, 2002), p. 360.

[6] See Jean-Louis Quermonne, *L'appareil administrative de l'État* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1991), pp. 137-153.